

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 NEA-10 HA-05 /093 W

-----071797 101500Z /47

R 100928Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7770

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USICA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 3043

DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORT, OAU, XA

SUBJ: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DAY II: ATMOSPHERE TENSE

REF: KHARTOUM 3018

SUMMARY: FIRST FULL DAY OF 31ST OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (COM) BEGAN IN CONFRONTATIONAL MOOD FOLLOWING HEATED DEBATE OF PREVIOUS EVENING, BUT APPEARED TO END IN BUSINESS-AS-USUAL ATMOSPHERE. OPENING ROUNDS SEEMED TO ILLUSTRATE POLARIZATION WITHIN OAU THAT MAY CHARACTERIZE DISCUSSIONS OF MOST CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS ON AGENDA. THERE ALSO APPEARS TO BE WILLINGNESS BY OAU TO AT LEAST DEBATE SERIOUSLY THESE QUESTIONS, RATHER THAN AVOID THEM, AS HAS BEEN COMMON IN PAST. INITIAL TENSION OF COM SEEMS TO BE DISSIPATING, BUT READINESS FOR CONFRONTATION IS SIMMERING JUST BELOW SURFACE. EMD SUMMARY
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1. COM RESUMED MORNING JULY 8 IN OPEN SESSION WITH POSTPONED SPEECH BY SWAPO REPRESENTATIVE (ANTONE CATENILLA) IN REPLY TO WELCOMING REMARKS BY SUDANESE PRES. NIMEIRI (REFTEL). OUTGOIN COM CHAIRMAN, LIBYAN FONMIN TURAIKI, QUICKLY PROCEEDED TO RELINQUISH CHAIRMANSHIP TO SUDANESE FONMIN EL-RASHEED EL-TAHIR BAKR. THEN,

RATHER THAN CONTINUING WITH ELECTING REST OF COM BUREAU (3 VICE-CHAIRMEN AND A RAPPOREUR) PER AGENDA, GABON REQUESTED RIGHT TO MAKE PUBLIC REPLY TO QUESTION OF "FOREIGN INTERVENTION" INITIATED BY LIBYA AND ZAIRE PREVIOUS EVENING. COM HAD BRIEF (20-30 MIN.) PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT WHETHER GABON SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO MAKE PUBLIC REPLY AND DECIDED TO ADJOURN BRIEFLY AND ENTERED CLOSED SESSION. (OAU SPOKESMAN ONU LATER INFORMED PRESS THAT ALL SESSIONS WOULD BE CLOSED TO PUBLIC HEREAFTER.)

2. COM THEN RESUMED FOR 30-45 MINUTES DURING WHICH EFFORT WAS MADE TO ELECT BUREAU, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS BECAUSE OF INABILITY OF NORTH AFRICA REGION TO SETTLE ON PERSON FOR 1ST VICE-CHAIRMAN POSITION. MORNING SESSION ENDED IN SLIGHT DISARRAY AND SOME ACRIMONY OVER NOT BEING ABLE TO EVEN CONCLUDE NON-CONTROVERSIAL BUSINESS. EVENING SESSION RECONVENED FOR NEARLY 3 HOURS AND WAS ABLE TO ELECT COM BUREAU(SEPTEL), EXPEL DELEGATION FROM COMORO ISLANDS (SEPTEL) AND HIGHLIGHT INCREASING POLARIZATION BETWEEN "RADICALS," LED BY LIBYA AND ALGERIA, ACTIVELY SUPPORTED BY GUINEA AND BENIN AMONG OTHERS, AND "MODERATES," LED BY GABON, SENEGAL, IVORY COAST AND ZAIRE.

3. FOLLOWING PRESS REPORTS OF CONFERENCE AND SITHOLE DELEGATION EXPULSION IN WESTERN MEDIA EVENING JULY 8, RESUMED COM MORNING JULY 9, BEGAN HEATED DEBATE ON CONFIDENTIAL

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DISTORTED PRESS COVERAGE AND ON PROPRIETY OF OAU NOT HEARING FROM SITHOLE DELEGATION, DIVIDING ALONG RADICAL/MODERATE LINES ONCE AGAIN. HOWEVER, COM APPEARED TO SETTLE INTO MORE NORMAL BUSINESS ROUTINE LATER IN MORNING SESSION BY HEARING OAU SECGEN'S REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5) AND DECIDING ON ORGANIZATION OF WORK. EVENING SESSION PROCEEDED WITHOUT ACRIMONY.

4. RESULT OF COM CRITICISM AGAINST PRESS HAS BEEN CESSATION OF ORAL PRESS BRIEFINGS BY OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN ONU, TO BE REPLACED BY MORE OR LESS DAILY COMMUNIQUE. ONU INTIMATED DURING FIRST AND ONLY PRESS BRIEFING THAT POLISARIO DELEGATION WAS PRESENT IN KHARTOUM. CONFERENCE APPEARS TO HAVE SETTLED INTO ROUTINE FOR MOMENT, ALONG LINES OF AGENDA BEGINNING WITH DECOLONIZATION AND LIBERATION COMMITTEE REPORTS MORNING JULY 10. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR FROM OPENING SESSIONS THAT MODERATES ARE WELL-PREPARED TO CHALLENGE RADICALS ON ALMOST ALL ISSUES OF ANY CONTROVERSY.
BERGUS

NOTE BY OC/T: KHARTOUM 3043 NOT PASSED OAU COLLECTIVE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KHARTO03043
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780282-0133
Format: TEL
From: KHARTOUM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780780/aaaacpig.tel
Line Count: 116
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f485e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KHARTOUM 3018
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2071801
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DAY II: ATMOSPHERE TENSE
TAGS: PORG, XA, OAU
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f485e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014